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REVIEWS.

Specimens of the pre-Shakspearean Drama. By John Matthews Manly. The Athenæum Press, Ginn & Co.: Boston, 1897. Vol. I., pp. xxxvii, 618; Vol. II., pp. 590 (Vol. III., in press).

THIS work is a notable addition to our resources for the study of the early English drama. In the first two volumes much matter has been collected from sources that were practically unavailable for purposes of class instruction, and all has been edited with great conscientiousness. The liturgical plays, the *Robin Hood*, *St. George*, and sword plays are contributions of special value, since they illustrate certain phases of the early dramatic development which have been too greatly cast into shadow by the mystery and morality plays. These two volumes will, I think, prove our best single text-book for the study of the early drama; they contain a larger number of characteristic plays than any other handbook, and present many plays for the first time in a carefully edited text. We shall welcome the third volume, for which the author reserves the gleanings of extended research relative to the development, history, and social significance of the pre-Elizabethan drama.

In the preface to the first volume the author reviews the considerations that guided him in the choice of plays for this edition. The reader infers from this brief discussion that the various principles of selection and arrangement were of so nearly equal force that the editor was driven to compromise, and we open the book a little in doubt as to whether we should expect specimens culled for their curious interest, plays selected each for its individual importance as an example of early literary art, or illustrations of a many-sided development through which we might trace, step by step, the evolution of the drama and the effects of slowly changing literary tradition.

The availability of these volumes for text-book purposes depends largely upon the aptness with which the texts illustrate constructive

principles. Too often, handbooks of selected texts seem to lead no whither, the learner gathering from them a mass of information, curious but inorganic. Such books, and the confusing *mélange* of courses which many departments of English now offer, embarrass the student who strives to gain that well-proportioned view of related influences which marks the safe leader in critical study. The selection and arrangement of texts become, therefore, matters of prime importance in handbooks of literature. The value of this work, as of other handbooks of literature, depends, in great measure, upon the clearness with which the continuity of development can be discerned through the texts selected.

The dramatic tropes and the Shrewsbury plays give a fitting introduction to the cyclic drama. Hitherto, the lack of the early liturgical plays, which furnished models for the cyclic plays, has made the study of the English mystery difficult. These Winchester tropes are, therefore, very welcome; with the aid of Lange's excellent collection they can readily be assigned to their proper place in the development of the Easter cycle. Would that we might have all the dramatic tropes lurking yet in out-of-the-way manuscripts! Possibly the highly irregular Christmas cycle would reveal significant steps in evolution, if a Lange should collect the remnants. The Shrewsbury plays also could not well be omitted; these will henceforth hold a leading place in handbooks of mystery plays, as much perhaps for the light they shed upon the preparation of the actor as for their intrinsic value in marking a distinct phase of the liturgical play. For the editor is unquestionably right in considering these plays liturgical rather than cyclic. The cyclic plays have so filled the field of vision that one's first impulse prompts him to assign each new discovery to some cycle, known or unknown, as ten Brink summoned a ghost cycle to receive the 'occasional' plays of Dublin.

When we ask what cyclic plays should be admitted to a work of this character, the problems of selection and arrangement become at once apparent. We may agree with the editor that the order of arrangement should be the order of cosmic history, and yet differ with him as to the relative merits of the early and of the developed cosmic cycles. The early cosmic cycle recorded certain essential steps from Creation to the Judgment, the later added many minor incidents and embellishments. Roughly stated, Creation and the Fall, Birth and Crucifixion, and the Judgment constitute the essential elements of the cosmic cycle; plays of the Patriarchs and of Anti-

christ are later editions. Should choice be restricted to organic plays, including those that formed the minor cycles for Christmas and Easter? But many plays are lacking in literary interest, others possess striking characteristics; and some of these plays, so the fates will have it, deal with minor themes in cyclic history. Probably no two editors would agree in their selection of plays for an artificial cycle. Our editor chooses two Creation plays, five Patriarch plays, four Christmas plays if we include the *Processus Prophetarum*, one Easter play, Antichrist, and the Judgment. If the relative cyclic importance and the order of cosmic history were faithfully observed, one might expect that the three plays of the Christmas cycle would be balanced by three pertaining to the trial and death, also that the Patriarch plays would be reduced in number, and the Antichrist omitted as non-essential. It is evident that other considerations had influence in the selection of these plays. Indeed, further examination leads to the conviction that the plays were chosen for their independent interest, subject to the requirement that each portion of the cosmic cycle should be fairly represented. The individual characteristics of these plays will probably impress the student more deeply than the evidences of organic development. This is to be deplored, since our methods of study in literature too often throw the text out of perspective through neglect of the influences that shaped it.

The Norwich pageants are so difficult of access that we acknowledge a great debt to the editor for placing them in our hands; but why not give them in an appendix? Their style is that of the latest plays, and is, besides, in some particulars obedient to French tradition rather than to English. Possibly one of the most significant lessons that the mysteries should teach is that of changing literary standards and fashions during the time of two centuries. A just impression of these changes is hardly obtainable, if the order of plays has no regard to date or literary convention. Of course, much can be done in the notes to give the student the proper point of view; still, it would seem desirable that the selections themselves should, so far as practicable, illustrate the successive schools of versification.

One is a little surprised to find the plays *Isaac* and *Jacob*, where candidates are so many. That these are singularly destitute of merit, as the editor says, all will admit, but poor workmanship does not prove them of early date. The metre, vocabulary, and lack of stanzaic structure are characteristic of the later fashion. One hesitates to place them much, if any, earlier than the formation of the

Woodkirk cycle. They are not essential to the cosmic cycle; they have points in common with various transition passages of the Woodkirk cycle. It is quite within the bounds of possibility that the compiler himself wrote them with the thought that something was necessary to preserve the continuity of history from the Abraham play to the Pharaoh.

In the cyclic mystery alone is there abundant material for the study of the development of types. Other forms of early dramatic art are represented by chance specimens of whose source and use little is known. Some were importations, as the morality *Everyman*; some sprang from customs whose beginnings lie outside the pale of literary art. Thus the Christmas customs and the 'Royal Entry' gave form and occasion for plays. Of the rustic drama few examples remain; and little beyond allusions to St. George plays, mummeries, and sword plays has found place in the histories of the drama. The student wishes to know what these plays were like, and in the specimens here given will find the best answer obtainable in any handbook. Possibly we shall learn in time the kind of play that custom pronounced appropriate to different occasions; for convention, we may infer, was insistent in its requirement that Christmas, visits of notables, society events, etc., should each have its fitting celebration. At present, our knowledge is of the vaguest. We do not even know for what occasions moralities were in demand, nor how it came to pass that one or more were borrowed from the Low Countries. Perhaps the schoolmasters inculcated morality by indirection in the intervals between plays fashioned upon classic models. To all these claimants, so far as specimens are extant, the editor has distributed justice with an even hand.

Next follow certain plays that bear little relation to one another except in so far as each was a positive influence in the rising Elizabethan drama. Probably compilers would disagree as to the respective merits of these candidates. It would take but few pages to add *Narcissus*, whose impossible plot is so suggestive of *Pyramus and Thisbe*. Other students, doubtless, have their favorites, but the editor has made his choices with so much discretion, and the collection represents so fairly the many phases of dramatic expression, that one closes the book well content that he should have his way.

This work, then, passes in review the early drama, observing the order of development so far as different types have been defined. It contains rare plays of varieties hitherto unrepresented in handbooks

for class use. No attempt to trace growth within the species has been made, or, indeed, was possible, except for the cosmic cycle; here the principle of selection lacks consistent application, and the result does not seem wholly felicitous. Every page bears the stamp of careful editing. So far as can be determined without collation with originals, the text is trustworthy. The page is attractive, the typography excellent. The editor has succeeded, I think, in compiling a satisfactory text-book for the student's introduction to the pre-Shaksperean drama. The specialist must, of course, pass on to exhaustive works of more limited range.

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A Concordance to the Poetical Works of John Milton. By John Bradshaw, M.A., LL.D. Swan Sonnenschein & Co.: London; Macmillan & Co.: New York. Pp. iv, 412.

THE time has passed when there is any necessity for a man to justify his labor in compiling a concordance, or devote his preface to explaining the usefulness of such a book. The impulse which recent years have given toward the comparative method of investigation, both in language and literature, makes such a book one of the most necessary tools in the scholar's workshop. It was therefore with pleasure that, in 1894, students of literature received the announcement of a volume soon to be issued from the press of Swan Sonnenschein & Co., entitled *A Concordance to the Poetical Works of John Milton*, and compiled by Mr. Bradshaw.

This book was the more welcome since works of the kind already before the public were very inadequate to meet the need of the Miltonic student. The first step was taken by Todd in 1809, when he affixed to his edition of Milton a verbal index of both the English and the Latin poems. When put to the test, this was found to be incomplete and inaccurate. Mr. C. D. Cleveland, of Philadelphia, finding Todd's work wholly unsatisfactory, took it as a basis, and, by corrections and additions, made what assumes to be a complete and accurate concordance, but which, in reality, is only a word-index. It is much fuller and more trustworthy than the work of Todd, but still it is greatly limited in its usefulness by the omission of the cita-